Managing Liquid Calories Made Easy

So far, this module of the course has been all about cutting calories with food strategies. After the last lesson, about eating in moderation, perhaps you're mindful of each calorie you eat, but what about the ones you drink? Many dieters fail to realize how many extra calories are in the beverages they love.

In fact, the average American drinks one out of five of their daily calories, according to WebMD. Find out what all those smoothies and Pumpkin Spice Frappuccinos are doing to your diet and pick up strategies for bringing liquid calories under control.

Alcoholic Drinks

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that alcohol accounts for about 5% of our daily calories. That's the equivalent of a 150-calorie beer.

1. **Lighten up on beer.** Light beer has almost half the calories of regular versions. Share a pitcher with friends.

2. **Enjoy wine and cocktails.** Wine or cocktails with club soda or juice are sensible choices. **Watch out for White Russians or Pina Coladas that have as many calories as a meal.**

3. **Practice moderation.** Two drinks a day for men and one for women are safe guidelines for most people. Be careful to avoid supersizing how much you pour. Otherwise, you may really be consuming 2 or 3 drinks when you think you've had just one.

Coffee and Tea

The National Coffee Association says Americans drink almost 600 million cups of coffee a year. That works out to 3 cups a day for each adult. While more Americans are drinking tea now, consumption is still just about half a pound a year per individual.

1. **Limit fancy coffee drinks.** Sugary syrups and whipped toppings pile on calories. Stick to black coffee or order a latte with skim or low fat milk.

2. **Plan your coffee breaks.** The real culprit may be the donuts and croissants you automatically grab with your coffee. Try a dish of toasted oatmeal with cut fruit instead. When you're on the go, carry yogurt or nuts along with you.

3. **Brew more tea. Tea is packed with valuable antioxidants and micronutrients called catechins.** Limit the amount of sugar in your tea and you'll limit your calories. Sip a cup of green tea for an afternoon snack or an herbal blend before bed.

Other Beverages

The other beverages most of us drink on a regular basis include some of our healthiest choices, like plain water. Industry data shows that Americans are drinking more water these days, averaging about 20 ounces a day.

1. **Cut back on soda.** Carbonated soda and soft drinks are high in calories. Even diet soda can cause sugar cravings. **In addition, a recent study suggests that 20 ounces of soda a day causes aging effects similar to smoking.** Switch to drinking water or ice tea.

2. **Eat whole fruit.** Compared to orange juice, a whole orange has more fiber and about half the calories. It also takes longer to eat the fruit so your brain will notice when you're full.

3. **Whip up a smoothie.** Homemade smoothies are an easy and delicious way to combine lots of different nutrients in one glass. Throw in spinach or kale and sweeten them with fresh berries. On the other hand, **store-bought smoothies may contain more sugar and chemicals than you realize.**

4. **Drink more water.** Above all, make water your first choice when you want something to drink. **We often confuse hunger with thirst, so staying hydrated will curb your cravings for junk food.** Water also boosts your metabolism, energizes your muscles, and aids digestion, all of which will benefit you in your efforts to lose weight.

If you're trying to lose weight, choose beverages low in calories and fat. For overall wellness, drink at least 8 glasses of water a day while you limit soda and Frappuccinos to special occasions.

This is the last lesson in Module 1. As promised, Module 2 will help you tackle your eating triggers. But first, we'll pause for summary and reflection.

Here's what you need to do today:

Write down everything you drank today.

- Were any of those beverages filled with calories?
- How much water did you drink?
- Analyze your list and look for trends. Can you substitute water or herbal tea for some of these drinks to cut down on your calories? Making one substitution each day will make a positive dent in the number of calories you consume. Consider how much that can add up if you do it every day!
- Put your substitution plan into action.